

Spanning the Gap

History along McDade Trail I Hialeah Picnic Area to Turn Farm Trailhead



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McDade Trail from Hialeah Picnic Area to Turn Farm Trailhead



*For everyone's safety,
please observe the **Rules of
the Road** for McDade Trail,
posted at trailheads, before
you hike or bike.*

- *Hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing only are permitted. **NO** motor vehicles are permitted.*
- *Pets are restricted, especially in summertime.*

A pay phone is located at Smithfield Beach. For emergencies call **(800) 543-HAWK**, which is **(800) 543-4295**.

The first segment of the park's **McDade Recreational Trail** opened on June 1, 2002—two miles of gravel path for hiking and biking extending from the north end of Smithfield Beach to Riverview trailhead on River Road. By this fall, the installation of pedestrian/cyclist bridges will extend this section southward to Hialeah Picnic Area and northward to the Turn Farm parking area on River Road—for a total of 5 miles each way.

This is a fitting location for this major recreational facility to start. Farms and settlements existed here long before the recreation area was established, and their fate is part of the park's story. The federal project that created the park, the proposed Tocks



BURNED: Kautz farmhouse around 1900.

Island Dam, would have been located on this section of the river. Below are thumbnail sketches of settlements along this section of McDade Trail "before the dam."



(Left) **BURNED:** Kautz Farmhouse in 1967. After the family moved out, the home suffered arson and was eventually demolished.

(Right) **DEMOLISHED:** A view of the many outbuildings in 1967.

River Road and Hialeah Picnic Area (mile 0)

River Road, running along the Pennsylvania side from Shawnee-on-Delaware to Bushkill, was once a rural thoroughfare lined with farms and farmhouses. The road linked inhabitants to a ferry which crossed from the river bank near Bushkill to the Jersey side near Walpack Bend. Subsequent removal of buildings for the proposed Tocks Island Dam project (See map) has eliminated much of this settled character of River Road.

In the 1950s a farm at Hialeah was developed into a community of vacation cabins. Newcomb House just south of Hialeah's exit, dates from 1740, with a later brick addition.



SURVIVED: Newcomb House would have been removed to make way for the dam's abutments.



(Left) **DEMOLISHED:** Robacher House in 1968, which stood on River Road just to the north of Kautz Farm.

(Right) **DEMOLISHED:** The summer kitchen to the Robacher House



(Left) **DEMOLISHED:** The Stone School House around 1900. Built around 1888 at what is now the exit from Hialeah Picnic Area, the school was one of four similar schoolhouses built in Smithfield Township.

(Right) The school district sold the building in 1927 for \$800 and it lived out its life as a private residence.



DE-AUTHORIZED: An artist's view of the proposed Tocks Island Dam, looking south (downstream.) The area that is now Smithfield Beach PA is on the right; the New Jersey bank is on the left.



DE-AUTHORIZED: The Tocks island Dam project, looking upstream from about the location of today's Hialeah Picnic Area.

Smithfield Beach and the Tocks Island Dam (mile 2)

Just downstream from Smithfield Beach is Tocks Island. Though flood control had been studied and discussed in this area for years, after a lethal and devastating flood in 1955, the Army Corps of Engineers planned an earthen dam at Tocks Island. Its purpose was not only to control flooding, but to provide recreation on a 12,400-acre reservoir, and supply electricity and drinking water to metropolitan areas such as Philadelphia and New York City.

The project immediately had opponents-local residents, environmentalists, even geologists. In 1992, the Tocks Island Dam Project was officially de-authorized.



(Above) Two ways to cruise the Gap: In the flood on 1955, a house drifts downstream past the (then fairly new) Interstate-80 bridge at the Water Gap. (Park photo collection)

(Below, left) **RELOCATED:** An apparently contented resident of Theune dairy farm in 1967, with the Delaware

A long and often bitter battle was over. What was saved was the free flow of one of the largest rivers in the eastern United States. What was lost were most of the area's historic structures on both sides of the river, demolished to make way for the dam, or the subsequent victims of the vandalism and neglect of a turbulent time.

River behind the trees in the distance. The operation moved to Cherry Valley near Delaware Water Gap PA.

Farmlands (miles 1-4)



Agricultural leasing programs, which keep nearly 3,000 acres of the park in cultivation, help preserve rural landscapes along the trail.

Theune farmhouse once stood on the east side of River Road near Zion Church. Ironically, the dairy's prosperity and the resultant modernization of this comfortable home and its farm buildings caused them to be judged of "little historic value".



(Above) **BURNED:** Theune farmhouse, River Road, in 1967.



RETAINED: (Left) Looking north from McDade Trail toward the north end of Mosier's Knob PA.



RETAINED: (Left) Looking south from McDade Trail. The south end of Mosier's Knob PA is on the right.

Zion Church (mile 3)



(Left) **ADAPTIVELY RE-USED:** The interior of Zion Church in 1967. *Delaware Valley Conservation Association*, a group of citizens who banded together to fight the Tocks Island Dam, formed here in 1965.

Not all buildings along River Road were lost to the removal actions of the Army Corps of Engineers, however. From a ridge above the river, Zions Evangelical Lutheran Church still surveys the valley from which its congregation has been scattered. The 1851 brick building, visible from the trail when the leaves are down, is a survivor of squatter occupation, eviction, and desperate interior damage. It was preserved through the pressures of families who once worshipped there and is now the recreation area's Office of Historic Preservation and Design. The cemetery is still used by local families, some of whom lived along River Road.

Riverview Trailhead (mile 4)

The river is tempting but it is also treacherous!

Please don't swim here.

Please swim at Smithfield Beach --it has lifeguards!



ADAPTIVELY RE-USED: Zion Church, looking east in 1967. At the far left is the stucco Michaels House (now gone) on the east side of River Road.



Zion Church, looking east today.



Zion Church, seen from River Road today.

Turn Farm (mile 5)

John Turn's land-which changed from a subsistence farm to a resort-dependent dairy farm, then to church summer camp, and finally a federally-owned recreation area-encapsulates the history of this part of the valley. An outdoor (*wayside*) exhibit tells the



story of Turn Farm at the trailhead.



Camp Ministerium, the tract's final incarnation before federal ownership, was just one of the many church and scout camps for adults and for children that once lined both banks of the river, many within sound of each other's bugled Taps each

night.

Editor's Notes

*A short distance north of Turn Farm Trailhead is the beginning of what is now called **Freeman Tract Road**, the original roadbed of River Road when River Road led to the ferry landing on the Pennsylvania side of Walpack Bend. This road is still owned by the township and is unpaved; it provides an extended stretch of lightly-trafficked road for walking and dirt biking.*

McDade Recreational Trail will be continued in phases over the next years until it stretches from Hialeah Picnic Area northward to Milford Beach.

(Above) A camper's snapshot of Camp Ministerium in 1967.

BURNED: The unusual Turn Farm Weave House was lost to arson.



DEMOLISHED: The chimney of the Weave House was still standing in this photo from 1995. It has since been demolished.



NEWLY-BUILT: McDade Trail at Turn Farm Trailhead today.